

## Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-10

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R 211053Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0001

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1133

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,TH LA

SUBJ: JOINT THAI-LAO COMMITTEE MEETING IN BANGKOK

REF: A. FBIS BK 180545Z JAN 75; B. FBIS BK 171001Z JAN 75;

C. FBIS BK 161629Z JAN 75; D. BANGKOK 698; E. BANGKOK 845

SUMMARY: THAI- LAO TALKS CONCENTRATED ON TECHNICAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL ISSUES. THE LAO SIDE EMPHASIZED THE PROBLEM OF GOODS IN TRANSIT TO LAOS THROUGH THAILAND. THE RTG IS PLEASED THAT THE TALKS SEEM TO HAVE SOLVED THIS LONG-STANDING PROBLEM AND THEREBY REMOVED A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO IMPROVED THAI-LAO RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO AN OFFICIAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE JANUARY 13-17 JOINT THAI-LAO COMMITTEE MEETING IN BANGKOK, THE EXPRESS TRANSPORT ORGANIZATION (ETO) OFFER OF A LOWER PRICE FOR THE TRANSIT OF GOODS WAS MERELY A JUGGLING OF FIGURES, SINCE THE NEW ETO PRICE DID NOT INCLUDE THE COST OF FERRYING GOODS ACROSS THE MEKONG RIVER. THE LAO DELEGATION REJECTED THE ETO OFFER AND MADE AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL THAT THE RTG ALLOW THE LAO GOVERNMENT TO SELECT A COMPANY TO TRANSPORT GOODS BY COMPETITIVE BIDDING. THE  
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RTG ACCEPTED THE LAO PROPOSAL AND THE LAO GOVERNMENT WILL NOW

CHOOSE A COMPANY SUBJECT TO RTG APPROVAL.

2. THERE WERE NO POLITICAL TALKS DURING THE MEETING BECAUSE LAO INTERIOR MINISTER PHENG PONGSACAN CONFINED HIMSELF TO TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS. THERE WAS NOT MENTION OF NORTH VEITNAMESE TROOPS IN LAOS OR THE POLITICAL SITUATION THERE. NO PATHET LAO MEMBERS WERE IN THE LAO DELEGATION. DURING FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA'S NOVEMBER 1974 VISIT TO LAOS, THE RTG HAD INVITED PHOUMI VONGVICHIT TO VISIT THAILAND. ALTHOUGH PHOUMI HAD NEVER BEEN SCHEDULED TO ATTEND THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING, THE RTG HAD HOPED HE MIGHT SHOW UP WITH THE DELEGATION, AND STILL EXPECTS HIM TO REPAY CHARUNPHAN'S VISIT ONE DAY.

3. THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING DISCUSSED PROBLEMS OF BORDER SECURITY. THE RTG SOUGHT LAO COOPERATION IN CONTROLLING THE TRANSIT OF PEOPLE INTO THAILAND, BECAUSE THIS MOVEMENT CAUSES SECURITY AND IMMIGRATION CONTROL PROBLEMS FOR THAILAND. THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE ON THE MEETING ( REFS A AND B) CONTAINS A COMPLETE LISITING OF AGREEMENTS WHICH THE TWO DELEGATIONS REACHED DURING THE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING.

4. A POLICY-LEVEL MFA OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT THE LAO WERE SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING. HE SAID THAT THE LAO HAD REMINDED THE THAI OF A WRITTEN THAI-LAO AGREEMENT OR TREATY WHICH STIPULATED THAT BOTH SIDES HAD TO APPROVE THE ORGANIZATION THAT SHIPS GOODS THROUGH THAILAND TO LAOS. THUS THE LAO WITHDRAWAL OF APPROVAL FROM ETO MEANT THAT ANOTHER MEANS HAD TO BE FOUND. THE LAO WERE UNAWARE THAT THE ETO PRICE INCLUDED THE HANDLING AND REGISTRATION OF SHIPMENTS THROUGH THAI CUSTOMS AT THE BANGKOK PORT. LOWER BIDDERS DID NOT INCLUDE THIS SERVICE. HE THEREFORE DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE LAO MIGHT AGREE TO HAVING THE ETO REASSUME ITS FORMER ROLE.

5. HE EMPHASIZED THAT, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE NO PATHET LAO MEMBERS IN THE DELEGATION, THE RG HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS WITH THE RLG AND NOT JUST WITH THE VIENTIANE SIDE.

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